



Nehemiah: Rebuilding Ruins

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Timeline

722 BC Northern kingdom conquered by Assyria;
ten tribes exiled or mingled with others

605 BC Daniel and others taken to Babylon

586 BC Babylon destroys Jerusalem and temple

539 BC Belshazzar's feast; Persia takes Babylon

538 BC Persian King Cyrus calls Jews to return to
Jerusalem and rebuild the temple

536 BC Work begins on building a new temple

Timeline

530-520 BC Temple work halted by opposition

520-516 BC Temple rebuilding completed

478 BC Esther made queen of Persian Empire

474 BC Haman's plot fails and he is hanged

458 BC Priest Ezra arrives in Jerusalem

445 BC Governor Nehemiah arrives in August;
walls completed in October

Would the Jews survive as God's covenant nation?

- Many in Jerusalem had previously been living as exiles in other lands.
- Regional rivals wanted Jerusalem to remain weak and Jews to stay scattered.
- Spiritual challenges: discouragement and apathy, intermarriage with non-believers, political and economic worries

Rebirth of a nation

- **Repopulating the land:** exiles returned and reproduced and claimed ancestral lands
- **Restoring worship:** rebuilding the temple (led by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, urged on by Haggai and Zechariah)
- **Reviving commitment:** teaching God's law so people know and live the Word (Ezra)
- **Rebuilding ruins:** making God's city strong and renewing national morale (Nehemiah)

Nehemiah: Rebuilding Ruins

1. Recognizing the need
2. A heart to do something
3. Combine prayer with action
4. Ready to battle and to build
5. Servant leaders, willing workers
6. Repent of sin; rejoice in the Lord

1. Recognizing the need

Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.” (Nehemiah 1:2-3)



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2. A heart to do something

- “This can be nothing but sadness of heart.” (2:2)
- “Send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.” (2:5)



(ESV Study Bible)

2. A heart to do something

- **Scouting the dream:** I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. (2:12)
- **Sharing the dream:** “Come, let us rebuild.” I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. (2:17-18)

3. Combine prayer with action

- I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. (1:4)
- Renew relationship with God before saying, “Grant your servant success.” (1:11)
- Four months later: I prayed to the God of heaven and answered the king. (2:4)
- The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding. (2:20)
- Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. (Psalm 127:1)

Pray like all depends on God. Act like all depends on you.

- We prayed to our God and posted a guard. (4:9)
- Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight. (4:14)
- We were aware of their plot ... God had frustrated it. (4:15)
- They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.” But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.” (6:9)

Constant conversation with God

- Hear us, O God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. (4:4)
- Remember me (5:19; 13:14,22, 31)
Remember me for this also, O my God, and show mercy to me according to your great love. (13:22)
- Remember evildoers. (6:14, 13:29)
- Story starts, is filled with, and ends in prayer.
“Remember me with favor, O my God.” (13:31)



Answered prayer

When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work. (4:15)

4. Ready to battle and to build

- Half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows, and armor... Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. (4:16-18)
- guards by night and workmen by day (4:22)

Christians are an army of battlers

- Fight the good fight of the faith. (1 Tim 6:12)
- Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3)
- Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (Eph 6:11)
- Contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. (Jude 1:3)

Christians are a crew of builders

- Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thess 5:11)
- Encourage one another daily. (Heb 3:13)
- Try to excel in gifts that build up the church. (1 Cor. 14:12)
- The authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down. (2 Cor. 13:10)

The stronger the building gets, the better it is able to resist attacks. Building aids battling.

5. Servant leaders, willing workers

- The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under the supervisors. (3:5)
- Shallum repaired the next section with the help of his daughters. (3:12)
- I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!” (4:19-20)

5. Servant leaders, willing workers

- I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. (5:12)
- The earlier governors—those preceding me—placed a heavy burden on the people... Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that. Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. (5:15-16).

6. Repent of sin; rejoice in the Lord

- All the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law...The Levites read from the Book of the Law, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. (8:3,8).
- All the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (8:9-10).

Dedication and Celebration

At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out ... to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving... I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks... And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away. (12:27,31,43)



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The Lord's building

- Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)
- In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:20-21)